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Arms Control after START II: Next Steps on the U.S.-Russian Agenda

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Summary

The U.S.-Russian arms control process has stalled. The Russian parliament approved the ratification of the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) in April 2000, shortly after the newly elected president, Vladimir Putin, expressed his support. Russia will not, however, allow START II to enter into force until the United States approves agreements signed in 1997 that would extend the elimination period in START II and clarify the 1972 ABM Treaty. The Russian Federal Law on Ratification also said that Russia could consider withdrawing from the START II Treaty if the United States withdraws from the ABM Treaty. This latter provision responds to the U.S. interest in developing and deploying missile defenses that could go beyond the limits in the ABM Treaty and Russian concerns that such a system might eventually undermine Russia's nuclear deterrent.

The Clinton Administration did not submit the 1997 agreements to the Senate for its advice and consent to ratification, in part out of concern that the Senate could reject them because many Members strongly oppose the ABM Treaty. The Clinton Administration could have submitted all of the agreements, or it could have submitted only the Protocol to START II, which extends the time frame for reductions under that Treaty. But, if the Senate approved only that single agreement, Russia's Federal Law on Ratification would have to be changed to permit START II to enter into force without approval of the ABM-related agreements. The Bush Administration has taken no action on the 1997 agreements. As an alternative, the United States and Russia could set aside START II and the 1997 agreements and seek to negotiate a START III Treaty that reduced offensive forces to levels favored by Russia and an agreement modifying the ABM Treaty to permit the United States to deploy a limited NMD system. But discussions towards this end have stalled as Russia is unwilling to modify the ABM Treaty and the United States is unwilling to reduce its offensive forces to the lower levels preferred by Russia. Furthermore, more than 20 Senators have objected to this negotiating strategy and have vowed to block any agreement that permitted the deployment of only a limited NMD system.

In the future, the United States and Russia could continue to negotiate arms control treaties, reduce their forces through informal agreements, or forgo coordinated arms control and size their forces according to their own economic and security interests. Supporters of this latter path acknowledge that the United States would lose the transparency and predictability of formal arms control, but believe the formal arms control process has become less important in the post-Cold War era. Others argue that, regardless of the changes in the international security environment, it would be politically unwise to abandon the formal arms control process at this time. Many in Russia may prefer to continue with arms control, to ensure reductions in U.S. offensive forces, to retain limits on U.S. defenses, and to garner favorable opinions in the international community. But, if the United States continues to pursue limited defenses, Russia, too, may have to pursue alternatives to the formal arms control process.

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Arms Control after START II: Next Steps on the U.S.-Russian Agenda

Introduction

The United States and Russia signed the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) on January 3, 1993.[1] Both parties delayed action on ratifying this Treaty for several years. In the interim, they worked with Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan to bring the START I Treaty into force, which occurred in late 1994. The U.S. Senate further delayed its consideration of START II during 1995, in part due to a dispute between the Clinton Administration and some Members of the Senate over plans to reorganize the Department of State. The Senate eventually gave its advice and consent to START II ratification on January 26, 1996.

The Russian parliament began its consideration of START II in 1995, but concerns about the substance of the Treaty; political and policy disputes between the Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, and the Yeltsin government; and negative reactions to U.S. defense and foreign policy actions served to delay consideration of the Treaty for five years.[2] During this time, the United States repeatedly urged Russia to move forward with START II, arguing that the Treaty would serve both nation's security interests. This reinforced the perception of many Duma Deputies that they could use the Treaty that Washington valued so highly for leverage on other contentious national security issues, such as NATO enlargement, U.S. bombing in Iraq, and NATO actions in Yugoslavia.

The Russian domestic political dynamics blocking ratification of START II changed dramatically in December 1999. Parties associated with then Premier Vladimir Putin won control of the Duma in parliamentary elections that month. On New Year's Eve, Boris Yeltsin resigned, naming Putin acting President. Putin handily won election as President in March 2000, and strongly urged the new Duma to approve START II. The Duma voted to approve its ratification on April 14, 2000. The upper chamber of the parliament, the Federation Council, followed suit on April 19, 2000.

The delay in the Duma's vote on START II essentially stalled the U.S.-Russian arms reduction process. The Clinton Administration was unwilling to begin formal

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[1]For a description of the provisions in the Treaty, and for a review of the ratification process in each nation, see Nuclear Arms Control: The U.S.-Russia Agenda, by Amy F. Woolf. CRS Issue Brief IB98030. Updated regularly.

[2]For a discussion of the issues that stalled Duma approval of START II, see, START II Debate in the Russian Duma: Issues and Prospects, by Amy F. Woolf. CRS Report 97-359 F. Updated April 17, 2000.

negotiations on further reductions in a START III Treaty until START II entered into force, in part because it wanted to make sure that further negotiations did not alter or eliminate some of the provisions in START II. In addition, according to the FY2000 Defense Authorization Act, the United States must maintain its strategic offensive nuclear weapons at START I levels until START II enters into force.[3] Supporters argued that this would provide Russia with an incentive to approve START II because ratification would be the only way to ensure that U.S. forces declined to levels equal to those that Russia might maintain as economic constraints forced it to reduce its nuclear weapons. Consequently, START II ratification became the door that Russia had to walk through before United States would continue on the path of nuclear arms reduction.

But the Duma's vote on START II did not break the stalemate on the U.S.-Russian arms control agenda. The Duma approved an article in its Federal Law on Ratification that states that Russia will not exchange the instruments of ratification for START II, so the Treaty cannot enter into force, until the United States approves several agreements, signed in 1997, that modify and clarify the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.[4] The Clinton Administration never submitted these agreements to the Senate for its advice and consent; if it had done so in its final months in office, the Senate would likely have rejected them. Furthermore, although many analysts hailed the Duma's vote on START II as a stepping-stone to START III,[5] and some expected that agreement to be concluded quickly, the United States and Russia remained at odds over several elements of START III at the end of the Clinton Administration.

START III discussions were also linked to discussions about modifications to the ABM Treaty. The Clinton Administration wanted to deploy a National Missile Defense (NMD) system in Alaska; Russia rejected any changes to the ABM Treaty that would have permitted this deployment. Even if the United States and Russia had worked out their differences, Senator Jesse Helms stated that he would have blocked consideration of any new arms control agreements presented to the Senate by the Clinton Administration; specifically, he stated that "any modified ABM Treaty negotiated by this administration will be DOA – dead on arrival – at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee."[6]

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[3]The FY2001 Defense Authorization Act contains a similar provision, but it would permit reductions in strategic offensive forces, without START II in force, if a Nuclear Posture Review conducted by the Defense Department recommended such reductions.

[4]On the Ratification of the Treaty Between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. Russian Federal Law No. 56. Rossiyskaya Gazeta. (Moscow) May 6, 2000.

[5]Analysts at the Monterey Institute for International Studies have stated that "the central importance about START II ratification is that it opens the gates for negotiations on START III." See START II Ratification: More Than Meets the Eye, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute for International Studies, April 17, 2000.

[6]Congressional Record. April 26, 2000. P. S2895.

Hence, the Duma's vote on START II may had little effect on the arms control agenda and the United States and Russia must sort through several issues that are bound together in the "web" of arms control. This report will review these issues and identify possible alternatives for paths through the web. It begins with a discussion of Russia's approval of START II. It then reviews the alternatives that were available to the Clinton Administration if it had tried to move the arms control process forward, and the possible outcomes if the Administration had pursued each alternative.[7] Finally, the report looks more broadly at alternative futures for the arms control process from the U.S. and Russian perspectives. These futures reflect alternative views on questions such as whether formal arms control negotiations should continue to play a role in U.S. and Russian national security policies and how Russia might respond to a U.S. decision to deploy an NMD system.

Russian Approval of START II Ratification

Arms Control and Other Priorities of President Putin

There is considerable debate among both Russian and western observers about President Vladimir Putin's "true" political orientation and priorities.[8] Many of Putins's critics portray him as an authoritarian threat to Russia's fragile democracy and an anti-western nationalist and militarist. As evidence they cite, *inter alia*: 1) Putin's 15 year-long career as a KGB foreign intelligence officer; 2) prosecution of the war in Chechnya; 3) appointment of many intelligence and security officers to key government posts; 4) strengthening of the military and defense industries; 5) curtailment of press freedom; 5) curtailment of regional autonomy, and; 6) pressure on opposition political parties and political dissidents.

On the other hand, many Russian and western analysts portray the new president as a serious economic reformer, determined to see Russia succeed in its transition to a market economy. Proponents of this view note that Putin: 1) effectively promoted free enterprise in St. Petersburg in the early 1990s; 2) regularly gives the Russian people sober assessments of the country's economic weakness and the urgent need to create a functioning market economy; 3) declares economic revitalization to be Russia's top priority; 4) appointed a liberal economic reform team that has put forward an economic plan that has won strong support from key international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and; 5) successfully pushed some key economic structural reform measures through the Duma.

Other observers say that these two faces of Putin are not mutually exclusive and that both are accurate. In this view, Putin aims to strengthen the power and authority of the central government, by authoritarian means when necessary; to rebuild as much as possible Russia's stature as a major power, in opposition to U.S. "global

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[7]The report will not track progress in specific arms control negotiations; this information can be found in CRS Issue Brief IB98030, Nuclear Arms Control: The U.S.-Russian Agenda.

[8]See CRS Report RS20556, Russian President Putin's Prospective Policies: Issues and Implications, Apr. 17, 2000.

hegemony;" and also, to strengthen and modernize Russia's economy, bringing it into the mainstream of the global market economy, and win large-scale debt forgiveness from the advanced industrial democracies. There is a good deal of evidence to support this view. Many of Putin's supporters see these policies fitting together in an overarching plan to strengthen Russia against internal and external threats, reversing the calamitous decline in state power and authority during the Gorbachev and Yeltsin years. Some skeptics, however, argue that while these may indeed be Putin's intentions, they are contradictory. In this view, Putin's emphasis on strengthening the armed forces and defense industries and the anti-American thrust of his foreign and defense policies tend to undercut his liberal economic reform plans and dependence on large-scale economic assistance from the West in the form of debt forgiveness, investment, and favorable terms of trade.

There is general agreement among Russian and western observers that Putin is a statist, i.e., that one of his core values is a determination to strengthen the Russian state politically, economically, and militarily. It is unclear, however, how he would respond if elements of that program came into conflict with one another, as suggested in the preceding paragraph. Such a situation is quite possible, if the Putin government maintains its uncompromising opposition to U.S. NMD plans.

Despite Putin's success in securing parliamentary approval of START II, his arms control agenda clashes at many points with that of the United States. The central conflict revolves around NMD and the ABM Treaty, where Putin has continued the Yeltsin regime's vigorous opposition to U.S. plans. Moscow feared that the Clinton Administration's proposed limited NMD might eventually have become a nationwide system. The Bush Administration's talk of a more robust missile defense further heightens Russian concerns. Moscow also may fear that it lacks the financial, and perhaps also the technological, means to match or counter U.S. NMD.[9] Because of the great quantitative and qualitative decline in their conventional armed forces in the past 10-15 years, Russian leaders perceive their country to be highly dependent militarily on nuclear forces for deterrence and, *in extremis*, to repel aggression from a quantitatively and qualitatively superior foe, such as NATO. NMD might degrade Russia's crucial nuclear capability. Many Russians believe that their country's only residual claim to great-power status is as a nuclear superpower, and that NMD might undermine or negate that. Moscow may also fear that even a limited U.S. NMD would cause China to expand greatly its small strategic nuclear force, which would in turn adversely affect Russia's strategic position. Many in Moscow also view the ABM Treaty as a major bulwark against U.S. NMD and are opposed to modifications that would permit NMD.[10]

Russian and U.S. experts agree that Russia's present strategic nuclear forces, totaling some 6,000 nuclear warheads, will contract dramatically in the next ten years.

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[9]Russian officials say they are confident they can thwart or overcome any U.S. NMD. This may reflect genuine confidence, or it may be propaganda aimed at discrediting U.S. NMD efforts, or a mixture of both. Proponents of NMD say the Russian claim is irrelevant, as NMD is not intended to block a large sophisticated nuclear force such as Russia's.

[10]This summary of Russian perceptions is based on Russian and U.S. press reports and CRS discussions with Russian officials.

The majority of this force is already 20-30 years old and will soon exceed its projected service life. Some service-life extension may be possible, but most experts agree that for these aging weapons, this becomes increasingly costly and questionable technologically over time. These assumptions are part of the logic behind Putin's decision to reduce Russia's strategic nuclear forces to 1,500 warheads in the coming years.[11] Based on expected bloc obsolescence of most of the existing inventory and on projections of new strategic weapons procurement, some Russian experts predict that their country could have as few as 1,000 strategic nuclear warheads in ten years that could be delivered with high confidence. Therefore, many in Russia have placed a high priority on concluding a START III Treaty with the United States that lowers the ceiling on strategic nuclear weapons to a level close to 1,000.[12] Many in Russia would also like to reverse START II's ban on multiple warhead ICBMs (MIRVed ICBMs), especially if the United States resists a very low START III ceiling, because it would be economically less burdensome for Russia to increase its strategic nuclear forces by deploying a smaller number of new missiles with more warheads per missile.[13]

Some analysts suggest that a possible U.S.-Russian "grand compromise" might include agreement on limited NMD together with a very low START III ceiling (discussed in more detail, below). Aside from the political problems on both sides inherent in such a deal, it poses a military-strategic conundrum for Moscow. As the ceiling on strategic nuclear forces gets dramatically lower, the consensus is that the perceived strategic value of NMD increases.

Factors Leading to the Duma's Approval of START II

For five years, the Russian Duma resisted President Yeltsin's intermittent attempts to get it to approve START II. Putin succeeded in winning parliamentary approval of the Treaty three weeks after being elected president. Many factors combined to account for the Duma's eventual approval of the Treaty.

Military/economic arguments for force reductions. From the beginning, the United States attached greater political importance to ratifying and implementing START II than did Russia. This was due in large part to the treaty's provision eliminating all MIRVed ICBMs, the core of Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces. Most U.S. observers viewed this as a great achievement because they saw these missiles as particularly threatening and destabilizing. Ironically, as the years passed without ratification and Russia's economic and military-strategic position deteriorated, START II became militarily more important to Russia than to the United States. Absent START II, the United States could maintain a force of some 6,000 strategic nuclear warheads permitted under START I. As noted above, Russia,

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[11]Details of this plan were not immediately made public, but the decision was widely reported by Russian and western news media on August 12-13. See Daniel Williams, "Russia to Cut Nuclear Arsenal," *Washington Post*, August 13, 2000, p. A 16.

[12]President Putin reiterated this proposal in talks with President Clinton in Brunei on November 15, 2000.

[13]Russian and U.S. press reports and CRS discussions with Russian officials..

however, could not afford to maintain forces at anywhere near that level. START II would require the United States to eliminate a significant portion of its land-based missiles and ballistic missile submarines, whereas age and economics were going to eliminate many of Russia's land-based and sea-based systems with or without START II. In his address during the Duma's ratification debate, Putin told the Deputies that the extended 2007 START II elimination timetable matched Moscow's planned retirement timetable for its aging missile force. He also reminded them that their heavy MIRVed ICBMs had been built in Ukraine and that it would be prohibitively expensive for Russia to develop and produce new missiles to replace them.[14] The military and economic logic of these arguments undoubtedly played an important role in winning Duma approval of the Treaty.

Effort to lock in continued U.S. compliance with the ABM Treaty. For years, a majority of Duma Deputies, aware of American eagerness to implement START II, held up action on the Treaty as a way of expressing disapproval of elements of U.S. policy. Moscow was, however, determined to keep the United States committed to the ABM Treaty. The Putin government argued that by ratifying START II, **with the provision that Russia would abide by it only so long as the United States honored the ABM Treaty**, they could get the Americans to stick to the ABM Treaty by giving them something valuable that they would lose if they abandoned it. Some critics of Russian policy argue that Moscow waited too long to play this card, as it is questionable whether Congress and the Bush Administration now would trade compliance with the ABM Treaty (if that meant foreswearing NMD), for implementation of START II. Nevertheless, this idea of linkage is believed to have played a significant role in winning Duma approval of START II.

Putin's political influence. The Duma's approval of START II in April 2000 was due in large part to changes in Russia's domestic political calculus. In the late 1990s, Duma opposition to START II was reinforced by its opposition to Yeltsin. In the spring of 2000, newly elected President Putin had a strong majority in a newly elected Duma. The political stage for ratification of START II was entirely different.

An eye toward's Russia's international image. Another consideration that is believed to have influenced Duma approval of START II is the matter of international prestige. Russians are acutely aware of their country's loss of status and prestige since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In view of the U.S. Senate's rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1999, and the generally high level of support in the international community for CTBT, the START Treaties, and the ABM Treaty, some in Moscow reportedly concluded that Russia's international image would be enhanced, and that of the United States diminished, if Moscow assumed the role of defender of nuclear arms control agreements. The Duma pointedly ratified the CTBT a week after approving START II. Some Russian politicians reportedly believe that the United States will ultimately be compelled to stick to the ABM Treaty

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[14] *Jamestown Monitor*, April 24, 2000.

and abandon NMD by the force of international opinion.[15] Few in Washington express this view.

Conditions included in Russia's Federal Law on Ratification

On April 14, 2000, after a closed debate on the Treaty in which President-elect Putin addressed the chamber, the Duma voted to approve START II. Five days later, the upper chamber, the Federation Council, approved the Treaty. The Duma attached a number of conditions to its approval of START II, discussed below.

Linkage to U.S. ratification of START II Protocol, ABM Treaty Demarcation Agreements, and Memorandum of Understanding on Succession. Perhaps the most immediately significant of these conditions links ratification and implementation of START II to U.S. ratification of several U.S.-Russian agreements signed in New York on September 26, 1997 that are not currently in force: a Protocol to START II, a Memorandum of Understanding on Succession to the ABM Treaty, and two Agreed Statements on Demarcation between theater missile defense and strategic missile defense systems.

- The START II Protocol extends the end of the time period for the parties to reduce their forces to START II levels from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2007.

- The Memorandum of Understanding on Succession names Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan as the successors to the Soviet Union for the ABM Treaty. Together, these nations are limited to the single ABM site permitted by the Treaty – the site that is currently deployed around Moscow.

- The Agreed Statements on Demarcation define the characteristics which distinguish between theater missile defense (TMD) systems, which are not limited by the ABM Treaty, and strategic ballistic missile defense systems, which are limited by the Treaty.

Article IX of the Russian Law on Ratification of START II declares that the treaty will not enter into force until the United States ratifies the three September 1997 agreements. President Clinton never submitted these agreements to the Senate for its advice and consent to ratification. Many believe President Bush is unlikely to do so.[16]

Linkage between U.S. Withdrawal from ABM Treaty and Russia's Possible Withdrawal from START II. Russian lawmakers attached a non-binding amendment to their Law on Ratification of START II declaring Russia's right

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[15]On April 15, 2000, President Putin told a domestic audience that the United States would have to renounce its NMD plans in order to preserve START II and the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, and if it did not, it would "become in the eyes of the world the party that is guilty of destroying the foundations of strategic stability." *New York Times*, April 15, 2000, p. 1.

[16]See discussion below, p.8-10.

to withdraw from the START II Treaty if the United States withdraws from or violates the ABM Treaty. This underlined Putin's statement to the Duma during its debate on ratification, that if the United States abandoned the ABM Treaty, Russia would "withdraw not only from the START II Treaty, but from the whole system of treaties on the limitation and control of strategic and conventional weapons." Putin reiterated this threat in an interview with U.S. journalists two days after his meeting with Bush in Slovenia in June 2001.[17]

Resolution calling for stable financing of strategic offensive nuclear forces. Throughout the debate and delay on START II ratification, Duma Deputies had expressed concern about the age and condition of Russia's strategic nuclear forces. Many feared that these forces would continue to decline in capability, with or without START II, because of financial constraints. Deputies frequently questioned the Yeltsin government about its plans for maintaining and modernizing these forces, but received few complete answers. As a result, the Duma included a provision in its Law on Ratification that called for stable financing for strategic offensive nuclear forces, to ensure that Russia could retain the forces permitted by arms control agreements.

Alternative Approaches for the United States

Because Article IX of the Russian Federal Law on START II Ratification ties that Treaty's entry into force to U.S. actions on the 1997 Agreements, Russia claimed to have tossed the "ball into the U.S. court."[18] Although the Bush Administration is unlikely to press for START II ratification, it could submit these agreements to the Senate for its advice and consent to ratification to move the arms reduction process forward. This section identifies four alternative approaches, and assesses the possible outcomes if the United States were to employ each approach.

Submit the START II Protocol/MOU on Succession/Demarcation Agreements Package

As is noted above, the September 1997 START II Protocol extends the time period for the parties to reduce their forces to START II levels; the Memorandum of Understanding on Succession names Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan as the successors to the Soviet Union for the ABM Treaty; and the Agreed Statements on Demarcation establish dividing lines between theater missile defense (TMD) systems and strategic ballistic missile defense systems. The United States pursued these demarcation agreements to ensure that its advanced TMD programs would not be covered by the Treaty's limits on the numbers and locations of deployed anti-ballistic missile systems.[19]

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[17]*New York Times*, June 19, 2001, p. 1; *Washington Post*, June 19, 2001, p. 1.

[18]Russia's Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, used this phrase in interviews after the Duma approved START II. See "Russia: Ivanov Awaits U.S. Response to START II Ratification," *Interfax*. Moscow. April 14, 2000.

[19]These agreements do not directly limit the capabilities of U.S. TMD systems. They state (continued...)

The START II Protocol must be approved by the Senate as an amendment to the START II Treaty because it alters the terms of the original Treaty. The Clinton Administration argued that the MOU on Succession and the Agreed Statements on Demarcation do not alter the ABM Treaty, but Congress has, nonetheless, insisted that they be submitted to the Senate.[20]

For several years, Clinton Administration officials stated that they would submit these agreements together, as a package, after the Russian parliament approved ratification of START II. This strategy was designed, in part, to reduce the likelihood that the Senate would reject the ABM Treaty modifications. The Administration believed that rejection was possible because several Senators were concerned that the United States would limit the capabilities of its TMD systems to meet the terms of the ABM/TMD Demarcation Agreements. Others had targeted the MOU on Succession, in particular, for defeat. These Senators, argued that the ABM Treaty was no longer in force after the demise of the Soviet Union, and that the Senate would have to approve the MOU on Succession to revive the Treaty. If the Senate rejected the MOU, the Treaty would not be in force and the United States could deploy robust national missile defenses without concern for treaty limits.[21]

The Clinton Administration apparently hoped that, by packaging the ABM modifications with the START II Protocol, members who were not strongly opposed to the ABM Treaty might support the whole package so that the popular START II Treaty could enter into force. This strategy might have been effective if the package had come to the Senate in 1997 or 1998 when support for START II was strong. However, since that time, support in the Senate for a robust missile defense system has grown deeper and wider as intelligence estimates have postulated an emerging ballistic missile threat to the United States from such nations as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. The negative attitudes toward the ABM Treaty's limits on NMD may now be stronger than the positive attitudes toward START II. As a result, critics of the ABM Treaty might be able to find more than 33 Senators who would vote against the

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[19](...continued)
that, as long as these systems are not tested against targets with strategic ballistic missile characteristics, the systems with lesser capabilities are automatically not covered by the ABM Treaty and systems with greater capabilities will be subject to each nation's own internal decision process to determine whether they are covered by the Treaty. For more details see Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service. Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty Demarcation and Succession Agreements: Background and Issues. CRS Report 98-496F, by Amy F. Woolf. Updated April 27, 2000.

[20]For details on the debate between the Administration and Congress see Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty Demarcation and Succession Agreements: Background and Issues. CRS Report 98-496F, by Amy F. Woolf. Updated April 27, 2000.

[21]See, for example, "Senate Declares ABM Treaty Null and Void; Blasts White House Position." *Inside the Pentagon*. October 8, 1998. p. 1. See, also, "Helms Calls on Clinton for Evidence that ABM Treaty is Legally in Force." *Inside the Pentagon*. March 4, 1999. p. 1.

1997 agreements, even if it meant that the United States and Russia would not implement the reductions in START II.[22]

If the Senate were to defeat any or all of the 1997 agreements, START II could not enter into force without further action by the Russian parliament to amend its Law on Ratification. However, Russia might not be amenable to changes in the law if it viewed the Senate's vote as an assault on the ABM Treaty. Russia continues to view this Treaty as the "cornerstone of strategic stability" and a central element of the U.S.-Russian arms control agenda. Consequently, if the Bush Administration were to submit these agreements to the Senate, it might result in stalemating or derailing the formal arms reduction process.

Submit just the START II Protocol

The Bush Administration could submit the START II Protocol to the Senate, for its advice and consent to ratification, without the MOU on Succession and Agreed Statements on Demarcation. The United States and Russia signed this Protocol after the U.S. Senate had given its consent to ratification of START II, so the Senate has not yet reviewed it or considered it for ratification. But the Protocol was included with the Treaty documents that the Russian parliament approved in April 2000. As a result, the United States and Russia have approved two different Treaties, and the Senate would have to consent to the ratification of this Protocol as an amendment to the Treaty before START II could enter into force, even if the Duma had not conditioned its approval of START II on U.S. approval of this Protocol.

Because this Protocol simply changes the elimination time-lines in START II, it is unlikely to be controversial on its own merits. Most analysts agree that this change became both necessary and sensible as the Duma delayed its consideration of START II. When the Treaty was signed in January 1993, it provided the parties with nearly 10 years to reduce their forces to the START II limits. But, as the years slipped by without ratification, the amount of time available was reduced. By 1997, some Russian analysts were noting that it would be difficult for Russia to comply with START II by January 2003 because it lacked the funds to eliminate large numbers of missiles in the shorter period of time.[23] Some also noted that many of the systems that Russia would eliminate under START II would reach the end of their service lives later in the decade. Hence, some in Russia argued that an extension in the elimination deadline was not only practical, but it would also help the government sell START II to the Duma because the government could argue that Russia would not have to eliminate any missiles that would not have been retired anyway.[24]

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[22] An affirmative vote on advice and consent to ratification requires a vote of two-thirds of the Senators, or 67 Senate Members. Hence, if more than 33 Senators vote against a Treaty, the Senate does not consent to its ratification.

[23] The Arms Control Reporter, Strategic Arms Reduction II, Chronology, September 26, 1997, Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, p. 614.B.99.

[24] "Russia-United States: Five Points of Accord. Summit Meeting in Helsinki: Success or Failure?" Sergey Rogov, director of the Russian Academy of Sciences United States and

(continued...)

However, if the Bush Administration submitted the START II Protocol without the MOU on Succession and the Agreed Statements on Demarcation, it may create a controversy that could undermine approval of the Protocol. Some Senators repeatedly asked the Clinton Administration to submit the agreements related to the ABM Treaty to the Senate. But the Administration argued that it made no sense to submit the START II Protocol until Russia approved START II and, because it viewed the agreements as a combined package, it would not submit any until it could submit all of them. If President Bush were to separate the package now, some might argue that he only did this to avoid a direct confrontation over the ABM-related agreements. Consequently, some Members of the Senate might vote against the Protocol to voice their opposition to the Administration's approach. Others might oppose the Protocol, even if they would not vote against the ABM agreements, simply because they believe the Senate has the right to address the ABM agreements as well. Others, however, may welcome the opportunity to review and approve the START II Protocol, without having it attached to the far more controversial ABM agreements.

Furthermore, even if the Senate were to consider and consent to the ratification of the START II Protocol, it might not be enough to bring START II into force. Russia's law on ratification clearly states that the United States must complete the ratification process for the Protocol *and* the agreements related to the ABM Treaty. On the other hand, Article IX of the Russian law on ratification reflects concerns expressed by Duma members and Russian analysts when the law was drafted in 1998. At the time, the 1997 ABM Treaty demarcation agreements were a high priority for Russia because they offered assurances that the United States would not develop theater missile defense (TMD) systems that would undermine Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent. Russian officials are now far more concerned about the effect that U.S. NMD deployment might have than the effect that U.S. TMD deployments might have on Russia's deterrent forces. Hence, the statement that Russia *could* withdraw from START II if the United States withdraws from the ABM Treaty, when combined with President Putin's statement that Russia *would* withdraw from a range of arms control treaties if the United States withdraws from the ABM Treaty,[25] becomes relatively more important than the conditions in Article IX. Consequently, the Putin government and the Duma may be amenable to changes in the law so that START II could enter into force without U.S. approval of the MOU on Succession and the Demarcation agreements *if* the United States were to accept limits on its NMD system and agree to remain within the confines of the ABM Treaty.

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[24](...continued)
Canada Institute. Moscow *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, March 26, 1997. Translated in FBIS-SOV-97-059

[25]President Putin reportedly told the Duma "If ... the United States dismantles the 1972 ABM Treaty, we will pull out of the system of treaty relations on the limitation of and control over strategic and conventional arms. We may also think of revising our commitments on tactical arms." See "Russia to Pull Out of Arms Treaties if U.S. Reneges on ABM." *Interfax*. April 14, 2000.

Withhold the 1997 Agreements and Complete the "Grand Compromise"

During the last years of the Clinton Administration, the United States and Russia held discussions on two new arms control agreements – a START III Treaty that would require further reductions in U.S. and Russian strategic offensive nuclear weapons and U.S. proposals to modify the ABM Treaty so that the United States could deploy a limited missile defense system. The framework for START III, which Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin adopted in March 1997, would have reduced U.S. and Russian strategic offensive forces to between 2,000 and 2,500 warheads. Russia has since proposed that the treaty reduce each side's forces to 1,000-1,500 warheads, a number consistent with the number of weapons that Russia is likely to retain by the end of this decade. On the defensive side, the Clinton Administration proposed a Protocol to the ABM Treaty that would permit the United States to deploy a single NMD site in Alaska, a location that is not permitted under the Treaty. The United States also plans to upgrade several early warning radars so that they could be used in the NMD system. This, too, is not permitted by the Treaty.

The Clinton Administration would not accept the lower numbers proposed by Russia for a START III Treaty. It argued that those numbers, along with several other provisions in the Russian proposal, would undermine the U.S. nuclear deterrent. Russia refused to accept the U.S. proposals for modifying the ABM Treaty. It believed that, once Washington is freed from the present confines of the ABM Treaty, the United States would expand its NMD system so that it could intercept Russian missiles and undermine Russia's nuclear deterrent. However, many analysts believed that the nations might have agreed on a "grand compromise." If the United States were willing to accept lower limits in START III, then Russia might have been willing to accept some modifications to the ABM Treaty that would permit the deployment of an NMD site in Alaska.

The Bush Administration has indicated that it probably will not pursue a similar arms control strategy. However, if these agreements were determined to be feasible and desirable, the President could withhold the 1997 agreements from the Senate and submit a new package for the Senate's advice and consent that included a START III Treaty and modifications to the ABM Treaty. Presumably, it would hope that this package would attract the needed votes for ratification by winning the votes of those who support both deeper reductions in offensive forces and those who support the deployment of a limited NMD system. Several factors, however, mitigate against the success of this approach.

Difficulty reaching agreement with the Russians. Since the United States announced in January 1999 that it planned to negotiate with Russia to modify the ABM Treaty, Russian officials have stated that they do not believe changes to the ABM Treaty would be in Russia's national security interests. They note that the Treaty forms the "cornerstone of strategic stability" and that any changes to it that would permit the deployment of a nationwide ballistic missile defense would undermine this stability. Russia also questions the U.S. contention that it needs an NMD to defend against emerging threats from nations such as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, citing doubts that these nations would have the technical capability or political

will to pose such a threat.[26] Furthermore, Russian officials doubt that U.S. missile defenses would remain limited in their capabilities or in the numbers of interceptors. They have heard many Members of Congress and President Bush call for more robust defenses. Even the Clinton Administration had stated that the United States could return to the negotiating table in 2001 to seek further modifications that would permit the deployment of additional interceptors and space-based sensors. Hence, many Russians remain convinced that the U.S. NMD system could eventually undermine Russia's nuclear deterrent. At the Bush-Putin meeting of June 16, 2001, the Russian President suggested some flexibility on possible changes to the ABM Treaty. In his interview with U.S. journalists on June 18, however, Putin indicated that he saw such changes in the context of a theater missile defense for Europe, with Russian participation. He also repeated his skepticism about ballistic missile threats to the United states.[27]

Many analysts and officials in the Clinton Administration believed that Russia would eventually agree to modify the ABM Treaty because, if it did not, the United States might withdraw from the Treaty. In this circumstance, Russia would lose all the limits and protections afforded by the Treaty, and the United States would be free to deploy more robust missile defenses. Some argued that Russia would become more willing to negotiate changes when the United States began construction on ABM facilities in Alaska. Furthermore, some have noted that Russia should have been willing to negotiate modifications with the Clinton Administration rather than risk negotiating with a Bush Administration that might prefer to deploy a more robust NMD system and to have the U.S. withdraw from the ABM Treaty.[28] But some Russian analysts take an opposing view; they argue that Moscow believes the United States would not withdraw from the ABM Treaty because this would damage the entire arms control agenda and tarnish the U.S. image in the international community. Hence, they argue that Russia's continued refusal to agree to ABM Treaty modifications will stop the United States from deploying an NMD site in Alaska. Others believe that Russia may simply stall the process, hoping that technological difficulties or political change in Washington may stop the U.S. NMD program.

The two sides may also find it difficult to reach agreement on the limits in a START III Treaty. Those who foresee a "grand compromise" believe it will occur when the United States agrees to reduce its forces to numbers below the 2,000-2,500 warheads agreed to in Helsinki in 1997. But it could be difficult for the Bush Administration to alter the U.S. position. Several press reports indicated that, in preparation for the June 2000 summit between Presidents Clinton and Putin, the White House asked the Pentagon to evaluate the U.S. position in the START III

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[26]See, for example, "Russia Rejects U.S. Proposals to Amend Missile Treaty," *Dow Jones and Company Wire Services*. May 4, 2000. Putin's visit to North Korea in July, 2000, and his presentation of Pyongyang's vague offer to halt its missile program in exchange for international assistance in launching satellites reinforced Russia's rebuttal of the U.S. rationale for NMD.

[27]See note 17 above, and the analysis in the *Jamestown Monitor*, June 21, 2001.

[28]The President's National Security Advisor, Sandy Berger, made this point during a meeting with the press. See "Russia has Offer on Missile Defense." *Washington Post*, April 29, 2000. P. A1.

negotiations and the implications of deeper cuts and that the military recommended against any changes to the U.S. position.[29] Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, at a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, that they would be comfortable with reductions to 2,500 warheads, but that they had not studied the implications of lower numbers and would not recommend deeper reductions until such an analysis were completed. They also warned against the tyranny of numbers, noting that lower numbers of warheads would not necessarily enhance stability and improve U.S. security.[30]

Consequently, if U.S. flexibility is limited in both the offensive and defensive negotiations, then Russia would have to do much of the compromising needed to reach a "grand compromise." But Putin may not be willing to compromise on modifications to the ABM Treaty. He has stated clearly, on numerous occasions, that the U.S. proposals for changes in that Treaty are not in Russia's interests. Furthermore, at the summit in June, 2000, he and President Clinton signed a Joint Statement on Principles for Strategic Stability. In that statement, the Presidents agreed that the international security environment had changed with the emerging threats caused by the proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction. And they agreed that the ABM Treaty already contained provisions that acknowledged it could be modified to respond to changes in the international security environment.[31] But President Putin did not agree that the emerging threats from proliferation justified modifications to the ABM Treaty. Instead, Russia has proposed the deployment of a theater missile defense system for Europe and renewed political efforts to stem missile proliferation.[32] Moscow has been slow to elaborate these proposals, and many analysts see them as aimed primarily at stalling U.S. NMD.

Difficulty winning approval in the U.S. Senate. Even if the United States were to accept somewhat lower limits in a START III Treaty, in exchange for Russia's acceptance of modifications to the ABM Treaty, it is possible that the U.S. Senate would not provide its advice and consent to the components of this "grand compromise." Several Members of Congress have stated that they do not believe the United States should reduce its offensive forces below the 2,000-2,500 warheads outlined for START III in Helsinki in 1997. When Senator John Warner, then Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, held a hearing with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Command, he outlined

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[29]"Pentagon Feels Pressure to Cut Out More Warheads," *New York Times*, May 11, 2000. See also Gertz, Bill. "Joint Chiefs Oppose Russian Plan to Cut 1,000 U.S. Warheads; White House Agrees with Moscow." *Washington Times*, May 11, 2000, p. 1.

[30]Landay, Jonathan S. and Steven Thomma. "U.S. Military Rejects Moscow Call to Cut to 1,500 Warheads." *Philadelphia Inquirer*. May 24, 2000.

[31]The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. Joint Statement by the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Principles of Strategic Stability. June 4, 2000. See also, CRS Report RS20604, U.S.-Russia Moscow Summit, June 3-5, 2000: Outcome and Implications, June 19, 2000.

[32]Ivanov, Igor. "A Challenge from Russia." *New York Times*, April 24, 2000, p. A27. See also, Grier, Peter. "Putin's "Star Wars" Lite: Could it Fly?" *Christian Science Monitor*, June 8, 2000, p. 2.

detailed questions about the implications of deeper reductions and received testimony from the Members of the Joint Chiefs that demonstrated their concerns about deeper reductions.[33] Hence, although a majority of the Members of the Senate probably support reductions in U.S. forces to the levels outlined at the Helsinki summit, it could be difficult to find 67 Members who would support reductions below that level.

Furthermore, it might have been difficult for the Clinton Administration to find 67 Members who would support an agreement that outlined modest modifications to the ABM Treaty. Many Members believe that the United States should no longer be bound by the Treaty and that it should deploy more robust missile defenses to deal with a wider range of threats. Twenty-five Members of the Senate took this position in a letter they sent to Clinton in April 2000. They told him that they "oppose in the strongest terms the effort to conclude an agreement that would purchase Russian consent to the U.S. NMD system in exchange for U.S. reaffirmation of a new, very limiting, legally binding accord." They noted that an agreement that incorporated the Administration's approach probably would not receive the Senate's consent to ratification.[34]

It would have been difficult for the Clinton Administration to build a coalition among Members who support the arms control process and Members who support the substance of the new agreements when growing numbers of Members see little value in the offensive arms control process and many may strongly oppose the substance of the agreements. Moreover, even if the Administration could have won enough votes to gain Senate approval for these agreements, it may not have had the opportunity to do so. As was noted above, Senator Helms stated that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would not consider any new agreements that the Clinton Administration submitted to the Senate. This set of circumstances virtually ensured that progress on arms control was unlikely in the last months of the Clinton Administration.

Change in the U.S. Approach to Arms Control. Finally, it seems extremely unlikely that the Bush Administration would pursue either of the two agreements contemplated for the "grand compromise." President Bush has said that he would like to reduce U.S. offensive nuclear weapons below START II levels, but he and his advisors appear to prefer a unilateral approach to negotiated reductions and a formal START II Treaty. Supporters of this approach argue that the reductions would occur more quickly if both sides simply adjusted their forces to meet their own national security others. Some have also noted that, with this approach, the United States would retain the flexibility to increase its forces in the future.

In addition, the Bush Administration has shown little interest in modifying the ABM Treaty so that it could remain largely in place. In a speech on May 1, 2001, the President underlined his support for more robust missile defenses than had been pursued by the Clinton Administration. He noted that the United States would have

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[33]The Federal Document Clearing House. Transcript. U.S. Senator John Warner Holds Hearing on U.S. Strategic Nuclear Forces, May 23, 2000.

[34]"Senate Leaders Tell Clinton ABM Deal With Russia Won't be Ratified." *Inside the Pentagon*. April 20, 2000. P. 17.

to move beyond the constraints in the ABM Treaty to develop and deploy those defenses. He indicated that he would be willing to consult with Russia about a new strategic framework that would include missile defenses in the deterrence equation. But his Administration has not indicated that the United States would approach these discussions with the intention of negotiating a new, formal agreement limiting missile defenses.

Many observers believe that if the Bush Administration pursues this approach to arms control and missile defenses, the Russians might be more willing to reach an agreement than they had been with the Clinton Administration, on modifications to the ABM Treaty. Not only would Russian officials welcome further reductions in U.S. offensive forces, they might also become convinced that the United States would withdraw from the ABM Treaty and pursue defenses that could undermine Russia's offenses if they did not accede to U.S. requests for a new framework.

What Future for the U.S.-Russian Arms Control Process?

The U.S.-Russian arms control process did not move forward during the last few months of the Clinton Administration. The United States and Russia remained far apart on many issues for a START III Treaty and Russia continued to reject U.S. proposals to modify the ABM Treaty. In November, President Putin did announce a new proposal for deep reductions under a START III Treaty, but he continued to link the reductions to U.S. compliance with the ABM Treaty.[35] The United States has shown little interest in negotiating reductions to the level proposed by Putin, and the Bush Administration has stated that the United States would move beyond the limits in the ABM Treaty with its missile defenses programs.

There are several alternative possibilities for the United States and Russia to move beyond the current stall in the arms control process. First, the two sides could continue to hold discussions and negotiations, in an effort to reach agreement on formal arms control agreements. Second, the two sides could continue to hold discussions about nuclear weapons and ballistic missile defenses and to cooperate in reducing their offensive nuclear forces, but they could do this without signing any more formal treaties that might never be ratified. Third, the United States and Russia could leave formal arms control efforts behind and, instead, each deploy those forces that each believes will serve its own national security interests. The following sections evaluate these alternatives from the U.S. and Russian perspectives.

U.S. Perspective

Pursue Formal Arms Control Agreements. The Clinton Administration believed that the United States and Russia should hold discussions and negotiations that could result in agreement on formal arms control treaties. This effort may have been prompted by a desire to resolve the outstanding issues in the discussions, or

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[35]Russia: President Putin Unveils New Strategic Arms Reduction Proposal. Interfax. Moscow. November 13, 2000.

simply because the process is in place and the participants continue to schedule and attend meetings. Either way, Clinton Administration officials continued to meet with Russian officials in an effort to resolve the outstanding issues associated with START II and ABM Treaty modifications.[36] Presidents Clinton and Putin also discussed these issues at several multilateral meetings during the last few months of the Clinton Administration, but they failed to reach agreement. The Bush Administration has not continued with these discussions in its first few months, but it could alter its policy and approach to arms control in the future. Following the Bush-Putin meeting in Slovenia on June 16, 2001, follow-up meetings were planned for the countries' foreign and defense ministers.

Analysts highlight several reasons why the formal arms control process remains valuable to U.S. national security interests. First, they note that the negotiations themselves can help build confidence and reduce tensions between the parties because they provide a forum in which each side can gain information about the other nation's plans and programs. Furthermore, supporters argue that arms control agreements contain a range of confidence building measures and verification provisions that provide each side with information about the forces on the other side. They also allow for predictable and transparent reductions in nuclear weapons. Finally, they note that ongoing negotiations and efforts to reach formal agreements serve both U.S. and Russian interests in contributing to efforts to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Both nations are committed, through the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, to move toward deep reductions and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Many non-nuclear weapons states measure progress on the U.S.-Russian arms control agenda through the signing and implementation of formal arms control agreements.

Some critics, however, have begun to question whether the formal arms control process actually adds anything to the relationship between the United States and Russia. They note that arms control is often a victim of stresses in that relationship, as when the Russian Duma delayed action on START II in response to U.S. and British bombing in Iraq and the NATO air campaign in Kosovo. Furthermore, some question whether the United States needs these agreements to benefit from reductions in Russian nuclear weapons. They argue that economic pressures are likely to reduce Russian nuclear forces to perhaps no more than 1,000 deployed warheads over the next 10 years, with or without arms control treaties. Finally they argue that the parties no longer need to rely on the formal arms control process to gain information about nuclear weapons plans and programs or to build confidence in their understanding of those forces. The two nations now cooperate on weapons issues in a number of ways, such as through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, without the aid of formal, detailed arms control agreements.

Cooperate without Formal Arms Control Treaties. Many analysts argue that the United States and Russia can continue to cooperate in reducing and

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[36] For example, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott met with Russia's arms control negotiator Georgy Mamedov in Oslo, Norway, on June 19, 2000, to follow-up on the discussions from the Clinton-Putin summit in early June. See "US-Russia Nuclear Meeting Ends Without Immediate Comment," *Dow Jones Newswires*, June 20, 2000.

eliminating nuclear weapons without formal arms control agreements. The United States and Soviet Union used this type of unilateral, reciprocal approach in late 1991 when they withdrew large portions of their non-strategic nuclear forces. Similarly, some have suggested that the United States and Russia begin reductions in their strategic offensive forces to START II levels without the formal treaty limits in place. They recognize that these reductions would occur without the formal verification provisions called for in the Treaty, but they argue that the hands-on experience gained through the CTR program would provide many of the same confidence-building benefits. They also note that, if they occurred informally, the reductions could take place more quickly than they would under START II's extended time-lines. Finally, they note that this type of arms control could meet U.S. and Russian arms control obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty by demonstrating their commitment to the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons.

Some critics of this approach argue that informal reductions would not offer the same benefits as reductions under formal arms control treaties because the parties would lose the transparency mandated by the START Treaties' verification regime. In addition, without START II in place, Russia might reduce its total number of deployed forces, but retain the multiple-warhead ICBMs that would be banned by START II. Some analysts would oppose this outcome, and would seek to retain the formal arms control process as a way to "shape" the reductions in Russia's forces.

Pursue Unilateral Force Structure Decisions. A growing number of arms control analysts from across the political spectrum, including many who are now hold positions in the Bush Administration, believe that the arms control process may have run its course and that the United States may have little to gain from continuing to seek formal agreements.[37] They believe that Russian forces will decline as older weapons are retired and new weapons are limited by a lack of financing. Although some believe the United States may want to retain a greater number of weapons to meet emerging threats to its security, most agree the United States can also reduce its forces to START II levels or lower. But they believe that the United States and Russia could each pursue their own paths to reductions, without waiting for the completion of formal arms control treaties.[38] Some who support a unilateral approach argue that the ongoing negotiating process is actually locking the U.S. and Russia into higher force levels and diverting attention away from more pressing nuclear safety and proliferation issues.

Some analysts who favor unilateral decisions on offensive force structures support this approach because they believe it would also make it easier for the United States to pursue its own goals on ballistic missile defenses. Russia could not threaten to withdraw from START II or START III were the United States to withdraw from the ABM Treaty, if the treaties were not in force to begin with. In this case, the

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[37]See, for example, Robbins, Carla Anne. "Politics and Policy: Bipartisan Thinkers Look Past Traditional Arms Control." *The Wall Street Journal*. May 18, 2000.

[38]As was noted above, this appears to be the approach supported by President Bush. He has stated that he would reduce U.S. forces below START II levels, after an assessment by the Department of Defense confirmed that this would not undermine U.S. security, regardless of what the Russians did with their forces.

opponents of national missile defense would not be able to claim that the United States had to choose between the deployment of NMD and offensive arms control agreements. Some supporters of unilateral offensive reductions reject this view, however, arguing that Russia would still be more likely to implement its own force reductions if the United States did not deploy robust missile defenses.

Critics of this approach react with many of the same points that were noted in the previous section. They argue that a unilateral approach would deprive the United States of the benefits of formal treaties, such as predictable force structure changes and the transparency offered by formal verification provisions. They also note that a nation that reduces its forces unilaterally could also increase its forces unilaterally, which could raise concerns in both Russia and other nations. Many nations, including the non-nuclear weapons states in the NPT and U.S. allies in Europe, believe that the predictability of the formal arms control process enhances all nations' security and precludes misunderstandings that could trigger arms races. Some believe that the United States would anger or alienate many of its allies if it were to walk away from the formal arms control process, even if it outlined plans to reduce its offensive forces.

Congressional Views. Although many Members of Congress continue to support the formal arms control process, recent debates indicate that a growing number may agree with the precept that the United States does not need formal arms control agreements to secure its national interests. Nearly ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many have concluded that the "Soviet" threat has disappeared and, therefore, the urgency and attention paid to arms control is gone. This trend also stems, in part, from the growing interest in NMD and declining support for the ABM Treaty. But, even some who support the arms control process have questioned whether the United States should wait for formal treaties to reduce its forces. For several years, Congress has precluded reductions in U.S. forces below START I levels until START II enters into force. But support for this language has ebbed, and many members may now be willing to allow the Bush Administration to implement unilateral reductions in offensive forces. Some Democrats have sought to lift the restriction on U.S. reductions for several years; they have argued that the Russians were going to reduce their forces for economic reasons and that the United States did not have to bear the costs of a larger START I force. They have also argued that the United States could maintain its security with 2,500 or fewer nuclear weapons. Democrats were joined by Republicans who would like to alter the existing legislation so that President Bush would have the flexibility to "right size" U.S. forces.

Russian Perspective

Although President Putin is a relatively new and untested leader, the objective reality of Russia's economic and geostrategic situation would seem to dictate certain aspects of Moscow's perspective on next steps in the arms control process.

Russia's preferences. First of all, Putin's government will almost certainly want to continue negotiating START/ABM/NMD issues as long as possible. Russia seeks to portray itself as the defender of the arms control process and of global strategic stability. It hopes to marshal international opinion, especially among America's European allies and important nonaligned states such as China and India,

in opposition to a possible unilateral U.S. decision to deploy NMD and/or renounce the ABM Treaty.

Beyond considerations of public opinion and propaganda, Russia's economic and geostrategic weakness probably causes it to place a higher value on arms control treaties now than does the United States. Moscow wants and needs a START III agreement to bring U.S. offensive force levels down to something near the level toward which their forces are projected to be shrinking in the coming decade. Moscow wants arms control agreements to block – or at the very least, to limit – U.S. missile defense programs. Moscow wants arms control agreements to make future U.S. decisions on strategic nuclear forces more predictable. And Moscow may now be less confident than the United States in relying on national technical means and data from CTR programs to substitute for the verification provisions of arms control agreements in monitoring the other side's nuclear forces. Absent START II, simultaneous nuclear force reductions without treaties would give Russia the opportunity to retain old and/or deploy new MIRVed ICBMs. Given the choice, however, Russia would almost certainly prefer to give up MIRVed ICBMs in order to keep the ABM Treaty intact and get low START III ceilings.

Although Russia will probably seek to continue negotiations on the START/ABM/NMD nexus as long as possible, if and when Moscow concludes that the United States is definitely going to deploy an NMD system with or without Russian agreement on modifying the ABM Treaty, Moscow will face a grave dilemma. How will it respond? Several courses of action are outlined below.

The European Option. President Putin has already revealed that one of his tactics will be to try to use a unilateral U.S. decision on NMD and the ABM Treaty as a wedge to split the United States from its NATO allies. Immediately after his inconclusive June summit with Clinton, Putin announced a brand new counter plan, a joint Russian-European-U.S. missile defense program for Europe, and flew to Spain and Germany to promote it. The Russians did not raise this idea with the Americans during the summit. U.S. officials view it more as a propaganda ploy than a serious proposal. Many European governments reportedly view it in much the same light.[39] Nevertheless, Moscow continued to actively promote this notion in the succeeding year, up to and following the Bush-Putin meeting of June 2001. That the preponderance of European opinion, including that of many NATO member governments, is generally opposed to U.S. NMD plans and highly values the ABM and START Treaties as the basis of global strategic stability was demonstrated during President Bush's June 2001 European trip. Many of the allies also assert that NMD would encourage proliferation. This is precisely Moscow's position. Thus, if it appeared that the United States caused a crisis with Russia over NMD, Moscow has positioned itself to use that to try to undermine NATO unity and perhaps even to fracture the alliance. Disrupting NATO has been a goal of Moscow for fifty years, of course, but it has taken on added significance since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and NATO enlargement. A prominent Russian strategic analyst gave this assessment in 1997:

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[39]CRS discussions with European officials, June-August 2000.

> As recently as 1988, the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies held a quantitative edge over NATO of about 3-1 in the main weapons of conventional ground and air forces. But ... today Russia is quantitatively weaker than NATO by a ratio of from 1-2 to 1-3. With NATO first phase enlargement this will change to a 1-4 imbalance.... Given the ability of NATO and the West to mobilize superior economic and technological resources, the discrepancy is even more alarming from a Russian perspective. Chillingly, in the case of revived hostilities, only nuclear weapons can be relied upon to negate this gaping imbalance.[40]

Since then, Russian alarm has increased, especially in light of the expanded doctrine of military intervention that NATO adopted in April 1999 and applied during the Kosovo crisis. NATO may appear more threatening to Moscow now than ever before, making disruption of the alliance a very high Russian priority. The Putin government might well believe that if the United States abrogated the ABM Treaty, deployed NMD, and as a result, gave Moscow the leverage to divide the alliance, this would be a net gain for Russia. Most western analysts would probably conclude that despite NATO allies' opposition to NMD, Russia would not be able use a unilateral U.S. decision to deploy NMD to break up the alliance. But from Moscow's perspective, it might well be worth trying. The European option would be most effective if Russia's direct response to the United States on NMD was relatively restrained, allowing Moscow to cast itself as the victim of reckless, arrogant, U.S. unilateralism.

The Military Countermeasures Option. President Putin and other senior Russian officials have repeatedly threatened that if the United States deploys NMD and/or abrogates or violates the ABM Treaty, Russia will withdraw from other arms control agreements, including START, INF, and CFE, and will pursue other asymmetrical responses. Such responses, they say, could include deploying theater nuclear missiles (TNF) in Russia and Belarus, increasing the number of MIRVed warheads on its ICBMs and SLBMs, and enhancing their missiles' ability to penetrate U.S. defenses. Russia might also sell anti-NMD technology to other states, further undermining the utility of NMD. Russian spokesmen state that it is both cost effective and technologically simpler for Russia to introduce counter measures to thwart NMD than to try to match a U.S. NMD with a missile defense of its own. Even if that were true, however, the military counter measures option could be prohibitively expensive for Moscow economically and politically. Many of the military measures that Russian officials have mentioned as possible responses to U.S. deployment of NMD and/or abrogation of the ABM Treaty are inherently threatening to NATO Europe and would tend to undermine the European option for Russia.

Constraints on Russia. Russia is presently producing one new type ICBM, the single-warhead SS-27. Serial production began in 1998 and continues at the rate of 10 per year. Moscow has said it intends to accelerate production to 20 or 30 per year – though it has yet to do so – and has said that it could MIRV them with three warheads per missile. Accelerated production and MIRVing might double or treble present costs. Service-life extension programs for obsolescent MIRVed ICBMs are

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[40] Alexei Arbatov, *The Russian Military in the 21st Century*. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, Pa., June 3, 1997, p. 9-10. Arbatov is the Deputy Chairman of the Defense Committee of the Russian State Duma.

also very expensive and would grow more so as the already old missles aged further. Moscow's threat to renounce the INF and CFE Treaties implies Russian deployments of theater nuclear forces in its western regions and also conventional forces in excess of CFE ceilings. All SS-20s were destroyed in compliance with the INF Treaty. The production complex that produced the SS-20 is now making the SS-27.[41] It is the only production facility in Russia capable of manufacturing either missile. A simultaneous large-scale build up of strategic and theater nuclear forces and conventional forces would be a great strain on Russian productive capacity and on the budget. The total Russian Federal budget for 2001 is about $40 billion, of which the defense budget is $7.3 billion,[42] about the size of the U.S. national missile defense program by itself. The U.S. defense budget in FY2001 is $309 billion.

Even allowing that dollar valuation of the Russian budget further understates its size because of the 4-to-1 ruble devaluation in 1998, and that Putin has already substantially increased defense spending, very large additional increases in Russian defense spending at this time could have grave economic and social costs. Putin has declared reviving the economy to be an urgent objective and outlined economic priorities in his State of the Federation speech in July 2000 and his address to the nation in June 2001. Since late 1999, the economy has begun to recover from its decade-long collapse. Many analysts question whether Putin could pursue an ambitious program of structural economic reform simultaneously with a military build up and perhaps confrontation with the United States. In addition, as is noted above, some of the military countermeasures that Russian officials have mentioned, such as renouncing the INF and CFE Treaties, redeploying TNF, and expanding western deployments of conventional forces, could arouse alarm and anger in Europe, and undermine Moscow's apparent strategy to use U.S. policy on NMD and the ABM Treaty as a wedge between the United states and NATO.

Furthermore, Russia is presently negotiating with the Paris Club of government creditors, seeking forgiveness for some 50% of the $42 billion in Soviet debt that Russia assumed when the U.S.S.R. was dissolved.[43] This is a very high priority for Moscow, which is widely believed to be incapable of servicing this debt. Absent any debt relief (rescheduling and forgiveness), the cost of servicing Russian Federation foreign debt would more than double, approaching half the current Russian Federation budget, which would be unsustainable. Default on this debt would have grave financial and economic consequences for Russia. If Moscow were to pursue the military confrontation option in response to a U.S. decision to deploy NMD or renounce the ABM Treaty, the United States and some of its allies might seek to

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[41]The SS-27 is produced at the Votkinsk Machine Building Plant, which earlier produced the SS-20. It is Russia's only ICBM production facility. *Jane's Strategic Weapon Systems*, Issue 32, Duncan Lennox, ed., London, 2000, p. 136.

[42]Keith Bush, *The Russian Economy in April 2001-Highlights*, Center For Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., April 23, 2001.

[43]The total rises to over $50 billion if a separate Soviet debt to East Germany, now owed to the FRG, is included, as Berlin says it should be.

block Russia's attempt to win debt forgiveness from the Paris Club.[44] Similarly, an atmosphere of military confrontation might discourage foreign direct investment in Russia from many of the advanced industrial democracies, which Russia urgently needs to help revive its capital-starved economy.

Despite Russian officials' talk of cost-effective asymmetrical military counter measures, they must also consider the possibility that if they adopt, or appear to adopt, a policy of military confrontation, that step might provoke a further, perhaps disproportionate U.S. response. Given the overwhelming economic and technological superiority of the United States at this time, a vigorous U.S. response might further upset the military balance, leaving Russia even further behind.

Decision in Moscow. With Putin in the Kremlin, decision-making is likely to be more disciplined than it was in the Yeltsin era. There is still evidence, however, of sharp differences among key actors and institutions in national security decision making, for example, between the Foreign and Defense Ministries, and within the military between the Defense Ministry and the General Staff. Nevertheless, given the President's constitutional prerogatives and Putin's reputation and record as a careful decision maker and his career as a foreign intelligence officer, he is likely to play the decisive role in Russia's policy on NMD and ABM Treaty issues.

A likely course would be for Putin to try the European option first. As long as Moscow appeared to be making progress toward the goal of splitting NATO, Putin might foreswear aggressive-looking military counter measures. If the European option faltered, military counter measures – *or the threat of such measures* – might be a logical next step. The big question is: if the European option were unproductive and if Putin concluded that the United States was determined to go ahead unilaterally with NMD regardless of Russia's objections and threats, would Putin go all out with military countermeasures and risk even a limited military confrontation (e.g., renewed arms race) with the United States, or would he seek some political-military compromise acceptable to Washington, permitting limited NMD?

It is difficult to predict what Putin's decision would be in this case. Putin has steadfastly prosecuted a brutal military campaign in Chechnya despite international, especially European, criticism. And he has vowed to strengthen the military. But he overruled his hardline generals' resistance (in March 2000) to resuming political and military relations with NATO after the Kosovo crisis had passed. Most observers believe he means it when he says it is essential for Russia to join the mainstream of the global economic marketplace, and he has begun some difficult structural reforms. Some analysts argue that Putin believes it is possible, and even desirable, to build up Russia's military and take strong stands on key international issues in opposition to the United States, and at the same time to reform and strengthen the economy and win debt forgiveness. Others question whether this is really Putin's policy, and if so, whether it is achievable.

Putin has taken a very prominent, personal position in opposing the United States on NMD and modification of the ABM Treaty. It might be politically difficult

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[44] See CRS Report RS20636, *Russia's Paris Club debt: U.S. interests*. July 18, 2000.

and costly for him, as a new leader trying to maintain his reputation at home as a strong leader and vigilant defender of Russian interests, to appear to back down to Washington on such a crucial issue – as Yeltsin regularly did. On the other hand, the economic and political costs to Putin and to Russia of prolonged high-level military-political confrontation with the United States could be ruinous. If faced with this dilemma, Putin might try to steer a course between the seemingly contradictory options of confrontation or concession. Such a course might include the following elements:

- no compromise on NMD or modification of the ABM Treaty
- no implementation of START II
- limited military countermeasures, such as MIRVing the SS-27 and enhancing strategic missiles' penetration capabilities
- continued dialogue and limited cooperation with the United States on selected issues of common interest
- pursuit of the European option and integration into the global economic marketplace
- reliance on the defense industries as the locomotive to get the economy moving.

While a "mixed" approach such as this may seem plausible, in the final analysis, Putin remains a relatively new and untested leader whose decision on this issue cannot be predicted with confidence.